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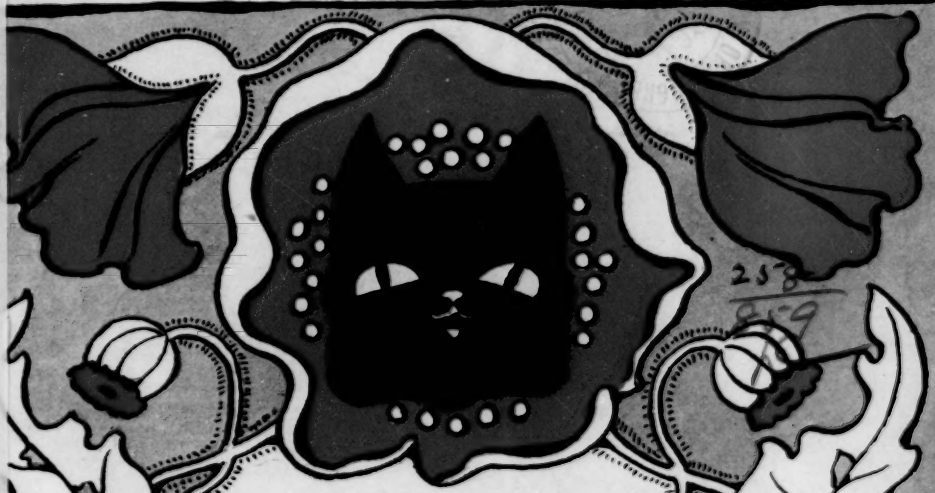
The Black Cat



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Vol. XVI., No. 1. Whole No. 181. Copyright, 1910, by The Shortstory Publishing Company

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A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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Vol. XVI., No. 1. Whole No., 181. OCTOBER, 1910. 10 cents a copy $1.00 a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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Romuilda's Children.*

BY FLORENCE TABOR CRITCHLOW.

IN every house is a story, of sorrow, of humor, of romance, or of mystery. In one of the remoter canyons of the Santa Cruz Mountains is a little, low cabin, so weatherstained, so mossy, so overgrown with wild honeysuckle and balsam apple, that it is unseen by strangers on the trail. But hunters never fire a gun, nor unleash a dog, nor do woodchoppers fell a tree, in its immediate vicinity, lest they frighten Romuilda's children.

How the gentle Romuilda married the sullen peasant Angelo is a tale of the Appenines whence they came. Angelo's search for unclaimed land led them, by twisted paths, far from the railroads and the settlements. He would not buy land, for is not this free America? He built the cabin, but Romuilda was the soul thereof. All day, and late into the night when the moon shone, Angelo chopped, and grubbed, ploughed, and planted. He was in haste to bring into existence and bearing a profitable little vineyard. There were days when he scarcely spoke to Romuilda, weeks when he never saw her face by daylight, for he carried his lunch with him to save the time of coming and going. He would have slept in the field, had that been possible. He was not un-

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kind. He had taken a wife, after the manner of his kind, to save the wages of a servant.

The gentle Romuilda, who had looked for romance in a democratic marriage, accepted its substitute drudgery with the silent strength of a thoroughbred. In a little clearing close by the house she planted potatoes, corn, artichokes, beans, "salad". Around her, as she worked, came the birds. Curious jays asked what was this creature, in a gown as blue as their own, who was as busy, and as self-poised, as themselves. Bush-tits twittered fearlessly over her head. Goldfinches bathed in the watering-pot almost under her hand. Confiding chewinks followed her into the house to beg for crumbs. Even the exclusive redshafted flickers, accepting her as a habitant, ran up and down the trees, unafraid.

Before the "salad" was old enough to set before Angelo, the birds had learned that the woman could be trusted. They ate from her fingers. They sat on her lap to beg for crumbs. Soon, gray squirrels and chipmunks attended the daily banquet. Romuilda was no longer lonely. She did not grieve for Angelo's neglect. The birds and the squirrels were to her as children. Some of them she called by name, and they responded, with apparent understanding. It is not the being loved, but the giving of protective love, which makes the happiness of woman.

It scarcely rained at all that year. In their ignorance Angelo and Romuilda thought this good, for they could be at work, out-of-doors, all winter. The second spring she had to carry water from the little mountain stream to start the garden. The ground was so dry that she carried a great many buckets full. The stream seemed smaller than last year. Then it all dried up except one little spring. They had no vegetables, and scarcely water enough to cook the store supplies, which Angelo brought, once a month, from town. Yet, somehow, Romuilda found food to divide with her children.

These, in this time of scarcity, depended upon the woman. She was their Goddess of Plenty. From instinct, rather than from conscious intent to deceive, she had never told Angelo of her bounty. One day his sullen strength was overcome by the intense dry heat. He returned to the house at noonday. Romuilda

was sitting on the doorstone. Bluejays were feeding in her lap. Chewinks were pecking about her feet. With comical side-jumps of caution, the squirrels ran down to snatch their morsels. Romuilda was the last of a race of Lombard warriors. When she heard Angelo's heavy step she did not so much as turn her head.

"Do not come nearer," she calmly commanded. "You will frighten my children."

Her voice was so steady that it did not startle the squirrel who was taking a bit of corn from her hand. Yet she herself was inwardly affrighted at the thought of Angelo's probable anger. They had never quarreled, because Romuilda never tried any more to talk to Angelo. He, so long as he was uncontradicted, had no inclination to quarrel. Now she meant to set herself in opposition to him, if he objected to the waste of food. To her surprise, however, when she quietly dismissed her pensioners and rose to face him, Angelo was not angry.

"Those squirrels will make a nice dinner," he conceded. "You have caught them very cleverly with your chaffer. It's better than taking them in a trap. If the trap doesn't kill them outright, they fret so that the flavor of the meat is spoiled."

Romuilda went into the house without answering. She would take her beating when necessary, rather than to kill her pets. But there was no need to quarrel before the time. Angelo talked a great deal that day. Some of his talk was very foolish. Next day he did not go to the fields. He complained of the heat, and of a queer pain in his head. The day after that was Sunday. He wanted the squirrels for dinner. He talked much of the anticipated treat. Romuilda made no answer. When Angelo found only a dish of beans, he would have beaten Romuilda, but found that he had not the strength.

He was obliged to put off, that week, his monthly visit to town for supplies. Romuilda could have gone, at first, but he would not permit her to do so. Soon the food was all gone, except a few crumbs which she had saved for her children. Every day she had divided her portion with them. The water in the spring was so low that she could hardly get enough each day for the bony old horse. Angelo was now so ill that she dared not leave him alone for the two days' trip to town.

Romuilda loved her pensioners, her children; she no longer loved Angelo. But our civilization decrees that the life of one brute man is worth more than the lives of all the animals at his mercy. Whether this be true in the sight of God, or even whether there be a God for the helpless animals, I do not know.

Romuilda sat down on the doorstone. She knew what she had to do. She went about it with the primitive directness which is righteousness. The squirrels came at her call. Unflinchingly as a butcher at his daily business, she caught one in each hand, held it by the throat, squeezing out the happy life, dropped the warm bodies, waited. Others, trustful of the woman, curious for their companions, came. A jay discovered the treachery.

"Traitor! Traitor!" she heard him scream.

"Murder! Murder!" squealed the flickers.

"Fear her! Fear her!" piped the chewinks.

She fed Angelo all of the broth. Somehow she got his limp body into the cart, to which she had harnessed the bony old horse. By nightfall they reached Los Gatos.

After Angelo's death, Romuilda wanted to go back to the cabin in the woods. The nuns who were caring for her could not understand her talk of children who waited for her, children whom she had murdered, children who would go hungry unless she returned. But they saw that to let her go was less dangerous than to keep her against her will.

Her cart loaded with grain and nuts, Romuilda came back to the little cabin in the canyon. The early autumn rains had already filled the springhole, and sent the overflow trickling down the stream-bed. She filled the watering-pot, and set it in the old place. Not a bird-voice could she hear from any of the trees. The silence choked her like sweet ether. She sat down on the low doorstone. Her lap was full of grain. In her hands she held out nuts. She scattered wheat on the ground. She gave the familiar call. There was no reply. All living creatures had deserted that part of the wood. That night, however, while she slept, all of the food was carried away. Was it possible, she wondered, that birds and squirrels forage after dark. Next night, after another day of silence, she watched. The thief was a skunk. Tears of humiliation rolled down her cheeks.

With a bag of grain she went cunningly into the woods, strewing in the dense thickets where chewinks are wont to scratch, and in the sunny glades where jays gather, and so leading them, by a circuitous network of bait, back to the lonely house. But the nuts she scattered only by the doorstone, for squirrels do not follow a clue to food, but run to their dens with their findings. Day after day she repeated her little wiles, with subtle variations, until again the birds began to gather about the doorstone. But when the woman herself appear a jay squealed:

"Traitor! Traitor!"

At the words, all of the company shrieked out curses. The cries echoed with a horrid concatenation of shrewish voices. Romuilda sank to her knees. Stretching out pity-pleading arms, she cried:

"Forgive, oh, my children, forgive! How shall I expiate my sin? Shall I squeeze out my own life for you?"

The jays laughed in derision. She went within, and returned, bearing a rope, her clothesline. She flung it over a limb of the big madrone. She did not see the squirrels watching in the upper branches. She brought a box. It was not a very large box, but it would do. Chewinks were scratching among the dead leaves. They paid no attention to her. A jay screamed, and dozens more answered his call. A squirrel was running out on the branch, examining the rope with curiosity. When the woman stood on the box, and reached out for the swinging ends, he ran back, angrily barking.

Her work was quickly completed. The curiosity of Grayfeather, always the boldest of the squirrels, overcame his timidity. Quivering excitedly, he jumped down, close to his human friend. She did not hold out her hand, nor call to him in her soft Italian voice. His hoarse bark brought his mate. She seldom ventured near the ground without his permission. To-day, however, he did not, as usual, cuff her out of danger.

Together, they examined the rope, with its oddly strange yet familiar burden. Grayfeather barked out sharp commands. He began to nibble on the rope. The little mate kept bright-eyed ward. Her husky cries brought a crowd of jays, always the sympathetic associates of the squirrels. As excitement crimsons the

pink cheeks of girls, so it deepened the brilliant blue of their plumage. The jays are the gossips and the guardians of the woods. Their shrill screams brought all of Romuilda's scattered children.

Grayfeather nibbled on, as though the rope were some new kind of nut. Romuilda had brought them nuts strange to the cool mountain forest, tropical almonds, sweet walnuts, delicate pecans. His teeth were very sharp. He worked very fast. It wasn't a very thick rope. When he was half way through, all of the twisted strands being once cut, the rope broke with the weight upon it. The weight fell to the ground. The distance was short, for the box was small. The ground was soft and warm.

Grayfeather called his mate. Joyfully receiving his permission, she followed him to the ground. The concussion had wakened the swooning Romuilda to dim consciousness. She felt on her face the tender little paws of her friend, Grayfeather. When she opened her eyes, she saw birds pecking curiously about her.

"I am dead," was her fantastic thought; "they are come to pick my bones. That is justice."

The flickers were quarreling over the bath. The watering-pot upset, spilling its contents over the face of the woman. She sat up, and knew herself forgiven by her children.

The Peradventurer.*

BY EMMET F. HARTE.

SQUATTY, inoffensive, ruddy-visaged, casual sitter on a park bench promises little in the way of story material — let us pass on. But stay — if he were attired in a neat, business suit, brown derby and gun metal shoes; and if he wore a purple four-in-hand skilfully knotted above a clean and altogether respectable-looking shirt? — no matter. Nothing doing; we'd just as well — hullo! Here comes somebody!

A tall, freckled, wild Western-looking person, sporting an enormous, high-crowned, wide-brimmed, gray hat, a neckerchief, salmon-tinted woolen shirt, leather trousers with an angora goat pelt on each leg, spurs, gauntlets, cartridge-belt and — softly! Do not stare in an annoying fashion — a dangerous-looking, blue-black revolver in a holster.

Now, that isn't so worse, eh? He sits himself down beside the squatty man on the bench. They are strangers to each other, apparently; it is a question if both are not strangers to the park in fact; other habitués of the benches seem to accord them that distinction. We will tarry a moment, on suspicion. You never know what minute somebody will spring a plot these days, and that's what editors, readers, secret service men and playwrights are clamoring for.

He of the bizarre apparel speaks. His voice has the coppery, bronze, nickel-steel, aluminum — no, brassy, that's it — brassy tone of the devil-may-care fellow. Quite in harmony with the swagger of him. It is a safe bet the rascal is a roystering blade, mayhap a Rough Rider or a Cattle-Rustler. Sure, they come to the cities occasionally. Blow in and blow out — or up.

"Stake me to a match," he says. No, no explosion is imminent, keep your seats! He merely ignites a harmless, home-manu-

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factured cigarette, inhales its feathery fumes and displaces the ash from the tip with the exhalation — you've seen it done. He continues speaking. There's our opportunity; sh — sh!

"Say!" — note the tone. "This is a tame little old speck on the map, ain't it? It's got a cemetery choked stiff for peace and quiet. Is this town all swathed up in cotton and slipping around on rubber tires, all the time? No wonder these here Easterners dry up and blow away instead of dying! They don't have nothing to make their blood circulate.

"A real, live, human kind of person gets the fan-tods just watching the procession pass. Everybody's in harness, just a-plodding and a-percolating along all serene. Out where I hail from it's different — " The little man looks bored. He averts a yawn. However, he murmurs, with a certain politeness:

"Yes? Where did you say — ah — you are — er — from?"

"Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, and so forth. I hail from the West; the West of the short grass, tarantulas, firewater and forty-fives. Where the flower of fortune buds, blooms, and blasts in a minute of fifty-nine seconds. Where cattle, rattlesnakes, buffaloes and Navajos run wild on the plains and where you can ride one hundred miles in a straight line and never see a house. Where just the mere carelessness of not holding his mouth right has cost many a man's folks the price of his burial, and where, if you don't like the way somebody does you don't have to go to court about it."

The little man is unquestionably wearied; no man can wear that air of dejection and utter fatigue and at the same time feel the sprightly interest expected of him by this ardent narrator. Beyond the foreground of high-reared buildings, a pallid pennant flutters from the slender staff on a distant tower; the little man's face brightens somewhat as he contemplates it. It is the weather indication for the day.

"Beg pardon," he says. "Where'd you say you were from?"

"Tombstone — Medicine Lodge — Silver City; and hundreds of other places. Out there the gun is the settler of all disputes and ready medicine for all complaints. And the quickest man wins. Why, sir, I've seen men shot before they could bat an eye. A flash of lightning would be just tinkering along beside it.

"Furthermore, you go out there anywhere, ask the first man you meet who's the quickest and fanciest gun-artist that ever scorched the breeze in that whole country and what'll he say? He'll say 'Electric Ed.', with thirty odd notches on his tally. That's me. Electric Ed."

At last, the small man seems impressed; not every day does a self-confessed killer come and sit beside you on a park-bench to prattle, naively, of his barbarous trade.

"Thirty odd notches on your tally, you say? Er—er—" Heartened and inspired, Electric Ed. produces the sanguinary revolver and points to a row of nicks on the under side of its forbidding barrel. He is not loth to explain:

"Each and every one of these notches means a human creature croaked," he says. "Some few through their hearts, but mostly plump between the eyes. I never made a botch of but one; he was my first. I shot him through the ear and the shoulder and the elbow; and finally cut his jugular with a bullet. He bled to death. That was sure a messy job."

"Careful how you handle that pistol!" cautions the little man. "Hadn't you better put it back where you got it?" His seeming nervousness is as rounds of applause to Electric Ed.

"You're safer with me here than home in your own bed," is the bad man's reassuring declaration. "I never had an accident. When a man drops, at the crack of this little pop-gun, it's not an accident. You're in no danger whatever, so don't get scared."

"I wasn't" returns his companion. "Ahem! Where did—"

"Yes," continues Electric Ed., reminiscently. "This gun and me have seen a few sights together. Take the time I landed in Western Kansas, for instance: I was nothing but a gangling kid. There was a bad man in that neighborhood by the name of Comanche Smith. He had a pick at everybody and claimed to be utterly careless about other people's lives; in fact he had shot two or three peaceful citizens; men who never toted a gun.

"One day he smoked up the town; of course everybody hit for cover; everybody except me. He undertook to make me dance. I popped him centre between his little rat eyes at thirty yards; he was my second. Five of his friends in a body

made me five more notches. That happened the same day.

"It made a fool of me for a month or so; I went around picking off this or that one, for little or nothing as an excuse. A bartender or two, four or five cow-punchers, a couple or three gamblers, Mexicans — Indians, I never kept no count on — and men I didn't learn their occupations, maybe half a dozen. One fellow I plunked because he chewed too loud, in a restaurant where I was eating my dinner; another one because he had on yellow shoes. I was uncommon careless and haphazard about it.

"Later on, I got more habitual and settled in my regular daily life and didn't perforate people unless they got obnoxious or personal with me. That's the best plan; then you don't feel like maybe you might've been a little hasty. A man, I argue, ought to have the right to live as long as he don't interfere with nobody else's comfort and don't array himself out in no outlandish clothes that irritate the people having to look at 'em.

"I've got to be more easy-going in late years; more restfullike and unconcerned. Take for instance that purple necktie you're wearing; now, I don't think that necktie is pretty. It might be all right on a female but it's too gaudy and conspicuous for a man. I used to smoke up at once, in a case of that kind, but I don't any more. A purple necktie ain't enough to kill a man for. Of course you add green and yellow socks, a checkerboard shirt, red shoes and one of these little, turn-up, go-to-thunder hats with a red, white, and blue band around it and it's different. I'd be justified in — "

"Certainly, certainly," the little man agrees, promptly. "But to return to the West — er — "

"Yes, I've had some mighty ticklish experiences. I couldn't just at this minute pick out one and say 'this was the most terrible' or 'this was the most hair-raising' of any; there's too many of 'em. Take the set-to I had with Bob Gault — ' The little man starts perceptibly. His right hand which had lain inert upon his leg has moved to his left armpit — swiftly.

"Yes," he says, evenly. "I've heard of that fellow. Read about him in the newspapers. He's a desperado down in the Territories, ain't he?"

"He was; he isn't any more. He's dead. I plunked him, at

ten minutes past four, Thursday three weeks ago yesterday. A powerful bad man Bob Gault was; dangerous, mean, diabolic; just as soon shoot you as to look at you; maybe a little sooner. He's got a long bloody record out in that country.

"Train-robber, cattle-rustler, horse-thief, man-killer; all-around bandit and outlaw. Him and his gang had things all their own way down in the Southwest. Drove off cattle, horses and stock of one kind and another, robbed banks, trains, stores, shot up towns, killed right and left and had that whole section of the United States scared stiff for fear the next minute would be their last. Thousands of dollars reward was offered for Bob Gault, dead or alive — dead preferred. All the sheriffs, United States Marshals and Pinkerton detectives which had been run in by the banks and railroads, were shaky about tackling the gang though.

"You'd think I'd've jumped at a chance for some easy money and excitement like that and gone hunting for Bob Gault myself; but it happened that I was wanted pretty bad on account of a small difficulty of my own, in which there'd been three first-class funerals; besides, Bob Gault and his outfit hadn't bothered me none.

"It happened that they did bother me finally though, and then was when I got busy. They stole my horse. I don't object to loaning a man a horse or, if he's having hard luck and I was feeling just right, I might give him a horse if I had one to spare; but when he cuts the wire fence and purloins a nag of mine out of his pasture, I get my dander up, immediately.

"It was a good horse they got. They had six hours or so the start; five of 'em as near as I could judge from the trail. I slipped on an extra gun, refilled my belt with cartridges and rode after 'em.

"Towards noon, I got close enough to the party to see 'em topping a hill something like a mile away. They didn't seem to be in any particular hurry; I was, so I peppered up a little; I was going to be late for dinner as it was. A couple of miles more and I caught up with them. Bob Gault was riding my horse; I knew him from his descriptions, tacked up around on telephone poles.

"He had his usual big 45's buckled on him and the four men

with him had Winchesters and other shooting-irons a-plenty. I circled out a ways and loped up to them from one side; I pulled up, about fifty yards away. 'Guess I'd better take that horse you stole back with me, gents,' I says. They stopped and begun to laugh; Gault laughed the loudest.

"'You better ride on back to your ma, young feller,' he says. 'We don't want to hurt you. We'll just call it square if you'll get a hurry-up move on you.' About the time he finished his little talk, one of the gang shot off his pistol to scare me.

"I didn't bother to answer; I just dropped a couple of the nearest ones, out of their saddles, deader than rabbits. Then the war broke out as the saying goes. I got one more of them before they killed the nag I was riding, but I couldn't seem to get a shot at Gault; somebody kept getting in the way. Him and the one that was left with him pumped a few shots and hit the high places. When they got out of revolver range they stopped to pick me off with the rifle.

"I caught one of the loose horses while the bullets were zipping around me, mounted and went after 'em. The fellow with the rifle was getting pretty close to me about every third shot or so; it looked like he might finally hit me if he wasn't stopped, so I took a long, high, pot-shot at him and got him. That left Gault and me for it, and he was game; he didn't run.

"He waited, as calm and collected as one of these here soldier statuaries, sitting there with his gun resting on his saddle horn. I rode straight for him. He didn't make a move till I got up close; thirty or forty yards away, maybe. Then he tilted back his hat with his bridle hand.

"'You're Electric Ed.,' he says. 'Ain't you?'

"'The same,' I says. 'Which shall it be, dead or alive?'

"I could read his thoughts; he thought he'd shoot first and answer afterwards; but his gun didn't leave the saddle. I shot from the crook of my left elbow — and that was the end of Bob Gault. He was plenty nervy but a wee mite slow; most of 'em are.

"Of course I couldn't claim any of the reward money without getting caught myself, so I had to pass it up; it's all owing to me yet, out there; several thousand bones of it. Too bad; I could

use that money right handy — " The listener stirs — relaxes as it were — and sighs.

"Er — er — " he begins. He did not finish the comment whatever it might have been, for at that moment a hand was laid on his shoulder. A plainly garbed, square-visaged stranger stood immediately behind the bench. There loomed the silent menace of a revolver in his hand and the point of a star peeped from behind his coat-lap.

" Come along with me," he invited, meaningly. " I want you."

What happened then happened too swiftly for even Electric Ed.'s lightning comprehension. A stabbing spurt of flame, a dull report, a curling wisp of smoke and the acrid smell of burned powder. The little man ran hurriedly across the grass plot, dodged behind a tangle of shrubbery — and disappeared. The man with the star lay where he had fallen, bleeding from a bullet wound in his side.

The inevitable crowd converging upon the scene, appeared from nowhere; two blue-coated policemen held Electric Ed., one on either side. The wagon came, clanging and clamorous; likewise the ambulance, rubber-tired, silent. At this moment the wounded man revived and sat up ; the bullet had been deflected by a rib.

" Where is he ? " he cries. " Did he get away ? "

" Here," says a policeman. " We've got him."

" I mean the fellow I was after — the one that shot me. That ain't him. That's just a youngster from the P. D. Q. Ranch Show over here on the Avenue. The man I was after was Bob Gault, the Territory bank-robber. I've chased him through a dozen states."

The Princess.*

BY JOHN REGNAULT ELLYSON.

OMMSEN could have given a graphic account of the affair and so could Travers. They didn't. Neither their paper nor any other in St. Louis contained one brief line touching the story everybody repeated. Sometimes it happens — but that's a small matter. The facts are these :

On the eve of the Exposition, Young Meims became master of himself and of his father's estate. He had just left college. He was a handsome fellow, clever in many respects — fresh and breezy and knowing. People liked him and people had always liked him. General Kerr, the profound Egyptologist, regarded him as a brilliant lad, as did the Honorable Madam Cecilia Brown, the writer of that famous work *The Sphinx and the Nile.*

His father's occasional companions, the General and the Honorable Madam, had interested him, too. He had heard many of their long talks and he had frequently dreamed of the mysterious land of which they said so much. Indeed, though he had chiefly listened to the romantic parts of their discourses and only read the livelier episodes of their books, he had nevertheless a decided failing for things Egyptian.

When the Exposition opened, he found himself at certain quarters on the Pike. On this side and that, he sought the sights and attractions he loved. He went there with General Kerr until the General grew dull ; he went there with the Honorable Madam Cecilia Brown until she grew wearied ; and then he went there alone and lingered there. He was frank and generous and he made friends.

He was especially drawn toward one fakir, named Pen-hui-ban, who sold amulets and charms, and toward the sister of the fakir, an irresistible nymph, who danced. They pleased him above all

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perhaps because he knew French and they knew French and flattered him. They were so affable, so genteel and withal so honest ; they accepted merely trifles at his hands and favored him with so many picturesque bits of gossip and knowledge concerning modern Egypt. Faith and good fellowship were established between them and love peeped at him through the slanting eyes of the fascinating dancer.

But at the roots of his heart clung a passion more poetic, more ideal — a desire as keen as love. It had been long growing — the longing to possess a mummy, of course, not such as those the General and the Honorable Mrs. Brown possessed — shriveled, blackened, grotesque, plebeian, — but a truly beautiful and distinguished specimen — some princess with Pharaoh's turbulent blood cooled in her veins, intact and peerless, magically embalmed, magically sealed.

This desire and dream of his young life Meims divulged in the early intercourse with his new friends. They were immeasurably surprised. At first the thing was practically impossible, they thought, what he wanted being in its perfection so rare, so uncommon. But soon they gave him some faint hope ; it was very unusual, very costly and very difficult to procure, they agreed, though perhaps not utterly unobtainable, and, besides, they had enterprising relatives and influence of a kind at Cairo and elsewhere in the still land of Egypt.

They wrote there. After a considerable interval they heard from those at the far ends of the earth. There were some chances, but none too favorable. Again, and there were better tidings. At certain points recently there had been excavations and fresh discoveries.

Then good fortune quickly followed. The cousins in the Orient, after much patience and toil, happily succeeded — after many delays and long waits, they seemed to have succeeded marvelously and wrote and described in glowing terms how they captured the great prize.

The fakir and the lady translated phrase after phrase of the strange Arabic letters, telling a singularly realistic story that rivalled romance. The most watchful care, the utmost secrecy had naturally to be observed, for the Egyptian authorities were

jealous and surprisingly keen-eyed. The secret once out, of course, meant total loss.

The excitement, therefore, increased as the transportation of the mummy began and post by post the little troubles and perplexities were enumerated. The case containing one of the sovereign children of old Egypt was finally at sea. There was less risk now, but every precaution had to be used. A long voyage over seas, however, and a trusty comrade as guard and all went amazingly well.

Meanwhile, the courtly fakir and the bewitching dancer, when their engagements would permit, received the hospitality of Meims at his handsome St. Louis mansion. Friends gathered in numbers — college chums and gay companions, artists and journalists. There were priceless wines, elaborate dinners, lavish outlays. The fakir was admirable; the dancer was charming.

They captivated every one. French was the language of those especial evenings and the fakir spoke the language so daintily, with an accent so Parisian. His name — Pen-hui-ban, as the General asserted, was pure Egyptian ; it could be found in numerous, ancient papyri. Indeed, he was exceedingly attractive in many ways and inexpressibly unlike the average fakir. The delicate features, the gentle manners, the singularly sweet voice, the melancholy air of a fallen prince — these gave him a peculiar grace and prestige. And the dancer with the warm brown skin, with oblique eyes resembling black enameled almonds, with a veritable mantle of dark hair, grew wonderfully alluring, yet the shyness of her glances had all the unconsciousness of innocence.

But of the other beauty — of the embalmed princess, none present at these receptions obtained the slightest hint. Counsel on that point was thoroughly kept. It was part of Meims' plan to produce, when the time came, a bewilderingly electrical effect — an audaciously splendid climax. This series of entertainments, already memorable by the introduction of the fakir and the dancer, should end in an entertainment at which he would dazzle the guests and display the beautiful daughter of a Pharaoh.

One day the invisible princess, sweetened with all the spices of the Orient, landed in New York. When they brought him this news, Meims wrung the hands of the fakir and the dancer in a sort

of shivering, glowing ecstasy. Yes, — after days and sleepless nights and weeks of anxiety, he could rejoice ; the sealed case was now absolutely under the protection of the American eagle and the American flag. And they summed up the cost — the gentleman of the South West and the couple from the Middle East, but the cost was nothing, comparatively, — nothing for so astonishing a prize, a paltry, insignificant five thousand — only this along with incidentals amounting to half as much again — a nothing, a bagatelle, a song.

All day telegrams fluttered. All day the sun sparkled. The young man, elate and restless, went around chirping of everything but that in which he was so entirely absorbed. The imperishable beauty arrived on the last Tuesday in October, I think, in the evening, at which time the amount involved was counted over and paid. The opening of the case, the presentation, it was agreed, should take place on Wednesday and the Orientals should slip in when and as they chose and view the exhilarating scene.

That day passed and night came and at Meims' a host of friends gathered — jolly companions, old schoolmates and gay acquaintances of more recent date. There were a few extremely comely women. There were some artists and two actors, as yet unknown but talented. There were clever journalists like Mommsen and Travers and there were some of the learned set, too, — Kerr, the great Egyptologist, and the celebrated Madam Cecilia Brown, whose last notable work, *The Harim Conspiracy against Rameses III*, had just been published.

Probably the guests numbered thirty in all — an uncommonly assorted but uncommonly genial assembly. The drawing-rooms were temporarily closed. The reception was held in the spacious dining-hall. From ten to twelve o'clock, they supped there and wined and chatted. On the stroke of twelve, the doors of the neighboring apartments were flung open.

All arose simultaneously and flocked forward. The drawing-rooms, redecorated and wholly transformed, presented in themselves a novel, sumptuous spectacle. The youthful and ingenious Meims, however, gave no one leisure to note particulars. He advanced toward the central archway, under the dazzling light of many arc-lamps, where, supported by a low table of carved por-

phyry, rested the mysterious case in full view — a strange case of fine wood wrought at the ends and the sides with line after line of wonderful hieroglyphics.

"My friends," said the host, "I am going to introduce to this charming assembly one of the rarities of the East, one of those exquisite objects so seldom seen — a beautiful mummy, the possession of which has been the dear dream of my life. I promise you I have here, not only a true princess of the royal blood, but the papyrus that was buried with her, containing her complete, romantic history. I call now on Mrs. Brown and General Kerr to assist me in unsheathing my treasure — my princess."

These words, surcharged with deep emotion yet clearly spoken, created a profound sensation. The General and the Honorable Madam stepped forward, trembling and mute; the others instinctively shrank back into a circle around the General and the lady and the host, who immediately set about their task.

The lid was raised and an aroma of I know not what perfume arose. Inside, they found tinted soft grasses and weeds in every crevice, magical cement, rare oils that time had solidified, myrrh and fine dust of frankincense, and then again strange weeds, and when these were cleared away, there was the form almost visible in a long quaint sack — a sack fashioned of odd cloth dyed and perfumed afresh, shedding still a different odor that permeated the entire atmosphere of the rooms. It was so delicious and yet so pungent that everybody who sniffed up the odor suddenly sneezed. Within this curious sack, too, were other curious wraps, thin broad bands of tissue finer than the daintiest web. These were unwound and still there were silky, new wraps and fresh-scented bands.

So, at last, with surprise and eagerness, with fevered interest awakened at every instant, with dancing eyes and quickened pulses and flushed faces, others joined in the process and it was then, in the haste and excitement of the moment, that the treasure slipped from the various hands and fell rolling on the floor.

Necks craned, movements this way and that, a jostling, a confusion and then came a volley of ejaculations, sharp words and smothered laughter, as those present discovered the pet Baboon of the gentleman of the mansion, which had been missing some

days and which now lay before them stiff and cold, clean-shaven and wholly unadorned.

"And the Oriental pals?" said Travers, aside.

"Oh, — on the jump toward Cairo, I guess," said Mommsen.

Just then, Meims, with a complexion of greenish pallor but smiling and sweet-tempered, walked up behind them and ran his arms around their shoulders.

"Mum," said Meims.

"Why, yes, — of course," said they.

Sometimes it happens — but that's a small matter.

The Magic Music of Modena.*

BY BRADLEY GILMAN.

WHEN Carlo Crivalli, the music-loving Syndic, or Mayor, of Modena, established the famous Crivalli Prizes, for musical composition, in 1878, he undoubtedly did a great service to the cause of music, in all that quarter of Italy; but, as the good man often said afterward, he regretted that out of the forty or fifty competitors who annually submitted original works, only three could possibly be successful and happy, while forty-seven or fifty-seven must perforce be disappointed and unhappy. Indeed, it was conceivable that in any year's competition one person might take all three of the prizes, and that would necessitate even more unhappiness to an even larger number. That is what nearly happened in the competition of 1903 — one competitor took the first two prizes, each 500 lire (100 dollars), and seemed likely to take the third, the "Grand Prize," of 1000 lire; but, — something else happened which prevented it.

In order to understand what it was that "happened" we must approach a little house of the Via della Pescheria, just across the Piazza Cenci, the first house on the left, and enter the fruit and vegetable shop of the ground-floor, as young Giuseppe Fiorentini entered it, early one morning in September of that year, 1903. A bright-eyed girl of about seventeen was sorting some figs, in a corner of the dim space, but, as soon as she saw him, she uttered a little cry of joy, hastily wiped her hands on her huge apron, flung both arms about his neck, and gave him an unreserved kiss of affection — which was entirely proper, inasmuch as she, Angolina Fontanella, was Giuseppe's "sposa," or fiancée.

After the impulsive embrace and kiss she held him by the

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shoulders, and looked more closely into his face. At once her own sympathetic face clouded. "What is it, Beppo? Why art thou so sad?" she cheerily demanded.

She waited not for him to respond, but chattered on, in a caressing tone, and smoothing his dark curly hair from his forehead: "Ah, but I know, Beppo; thou need'st not to tell me. It is the Crivalli prize — some stupid pig has been given it." And her face now expressed rage, with all the sudden passion of the Latin race. "I hate him — oh, I hate him. But who is he, Beppo caro?" And curiosity at once succeeded rage in her mobile countenance.

The young man was regarding her mournfully, silently. Now he raised a hand and slowly pointed upward, and, as her large, dark eyes grew larger in surprise, he said, "Yes, he — your uncle — no other."

Angolina threw up her arms in protest. "He? That one? He has no soul; he is only an artisan; he loves queer art-objects, and no more; he — "

Giuseppe lifted his finger to correct her: "Yet loves something more." He said, firmly, and, as the girl's puzzled face lighted with quick perception, he nodded and pronounced the word "Money."

"Yes, money — always money," echoed Angolina. "That is his deity — all those beautiful and rare objects, up in the garret-room, even the quaint musical instruments — are worth only money to him; not from love of the beautiful has he left to me, more and more, the care of this shop; he now buys and sells what brings him more yellow gold than do figs and oranges. But *tell me, Beppo,* how didst thou hear about the award? What sort of composition could my miserly, cruel old uncle produce? Bah! he has no genius, as thou hast, mio caro."

Giuseppe walked restlessly about the dim little shop, and Angolina stood in a charming pose, leaning on a box of lemons. "Nay," but he has a singular insight or inspiration in his themes, the judges say; and some fair technical skill in developing them. One who got a glance at the score of his fugue told me that it shows merit; a weird character it has. All the judges recognized its originality, and agreed in bestowing the prize;

one, only, was reluctant, because he sensed an uncanny quality in the thing; he grew pale and nearly fainted, they say, when the piece was played; and others of the judges were conscious of strange emotions in themselves as they listened. Still, the prize is awarded; that suffices; no more need be said. I had hoped, Nina mia" (and his voice grew tender and sad), "to gain this prize; for, with that, we might have ventured — "

The sympathetic creature threw her arms about her lover's neck and kissed him re-assuringly. "We will be patient, Riccioluto (curly-head); we are still young, thou and I; but what thou saidst about the weird quality of my wicked uncle's fugue makes me think — and remember and wonder; for I have peeped into his closed work-shop, up there in the roof, although he has forbade me; and I have seen him doing strange things; I — I — I begin to understand what his singular actions might mean;" and she pondered, in the prettiest fashion imaginable, with her shapely hand propping her round chin.

After a little she answered her lover's inquiring gaze: "I have peeped through a chink in the wooden wall, Beppo, several times — and once I stole in, when he had left the door unlocked. I have seen his hard, cruel face eagerly bent over one or another of his strange mechanisms, some of them fashioned by his ingenious brain and clever hand; one was a tiny platform, like that Planchette device, which the conjuror used, you remember, at the Verona fair; and there was, also, a large roulette-board; at least it looked like one. I recall that its base was marked out like a music-staff and, too, he has a kind of altar or shrine, in the room, with all sorts of queer figures, — wooden and metal, triangles and squares, hanging around it; and in a crucible, on the altar, he sometimes burns strange aromatic roots and gums."

As she thus recounted what she had seen in the mysterious room, her voice lowered more and more, until she spoke only in an awed whisper, ending, "Oh, Beppo, I wonder, — can it be possible — that he is in league — with Diabolus? I certainly did see a dreadful figure, on a parchment, behind the shrine; it was like the body of a goat, and had a face like the Evil One."

Giuseppe became thoughtful; he carried a belief in evil spir

its in his very blood; he pondered her suggestion. "Surely the fugue was wonderful, yet fiendish," so one judge had declared. "I wonder, Nina, if what you say can be possible?"

"Oh, it is too bad," ejaculated Angolina, now quite accepting the theory of Satanic assistance, and rebellious solely at the award. "And only think, Beppo! I burned candles and said prayers before three saints, in the Duomo. Ah, they could do little, poor dear saints, against the Prince of Darkness."

Giuseppe still reflected. Presently he said, in all the simplicity of his nature, — Latin and artistic, — "That would, indeed, explain the marvel, Nina. If Diabolus gave him a theme, original, remarkable, and he worked it out, in a free style, that would produce about the kind of composition which this fantastic fugue is said to be. I wonder, now — I wonder."

Again the impetuous sympathetic girl embraced him, smoothed his forehead, and counselled, "But cheer up, my Beppo. There is the second prize, next month. Try for that. Thou shall work hard with thy keen brain, and I — I — thy poor little stupid one, will burn twice as many candles and say twice as many prayers, in the Duomo; yea, I will try other saints; mayhap I shall hit upon stronger ones, this time."

So there was much kissing and caressing, until a cross-looking old woman stumbled in upon them, demanding carrots and turnips; whereupon sentiment was thrust aside, and prose reigned in the little shop. Afterward, with one more kiss, Giuseppe went away, to ponder upon his composition for the second prize.

The days passed, and the weeks. Old Adolfo Spinelli, Angolina's uncle, avaricious, soulless collector and composer, went shuffling about the house, and along the narrower lanes and alleys — he seemed to shun the open sun-lit streets — and, as he passed along, muttering, and with half-shut eyelids, the children fled from his path, and whispered together that he had the "Evil Eye."

Angolina kept as busily as possible — and cleverly, too — at her buying and selling. She was earlier than anybody at the market, in the Piazza Popolo, and many a prayer she said — as she purchased her fruits and vegetables and flowers, and transported them to the little shop — that this and that saint

would make her purchases and sales profitable, so that she and Beppo might soon marry, even if — even if he did not — but then! He would succeed! the next prize would certainly be his! And, despite her many cares and duties, she found time to go, often, to the Duomo, where she said so many prayers in so many chapels, and burned so many candles before so many shrines, that her friends were puzzled by her increased devotion.

As for Giuseppe, he also was very busy. He had his practising and teaching, beside his all-important composition for the second contest. He secluded himself much. Angolina saw him but little, and his friends saw him even less. He had, too, an engagement to play, through several small towns, during one week.

Thus the time passed, and the month was about over. When he returned from his tour, Angolina met him, breathless with excitement, and had much to tell him. They walked along the avenues of the "Water-Garden." When they were quite alone, under the plane-trees and among the acacia-shrubs she told him what had happened. "O Beppo, I have seen strange and dreadful things," she began, and stared, with large eyes all about her, and clung to his hand. "I have seen my wicked uncle in league with the Wicked One himself. I looked through the keyhole of the garret, and — and — but let me begin at the beginning."

Here she drew a long breath, and collected herself. "During the first week he seemed much absorbed in his thoughts. He was cross when he stumbled over me, for usually he seemed not to see me; then he went away for two days, out into the country; when he returned, he brought with him several wicker cages, and in each cage were several little owls. Singular, was it not, Beppo? But thou shalt hear more and stranger things.

"He turned the little owls loose, in the long raftered garret; and then I saw that he had stretched cords, — Oh, the shrewd one! — across the garret at one end, so that they formed a veritable music-staff; he hung food for the little owls on these cords, and, by scolding them from the other parts of the room, in a few days he had them trained to fly thither whenever they were frightened."

Giuseppe's eyes were fixed upon his "Sposa" as she talked,

and now his face lighted up. "Ah, dear one, I begin to understand his magic arts; but not wholly do I understand."

"Wait, Beppo, and thou shalt know all!" she answered, with agitation. "Much of the time when he was in the place he was poring over a huge leather-covered book, with iron clasps. It had a padlock, and he always locked it when he left. Well, one day, a week ago, he seemed especially excited, and he made ready the brazier on that evil altar, and hung and re-hung the horrid banners and scrolls, many times. He seemed to seek some particular grouping for them. Then he dressed himself in a long red gown, with gold embroidery, which he took from his great oak chest, and he stood before the brazier, and waved his hands and bowed himself, and seemed to mutter prayers to that fierce, monstrous devil-figure on the banner, and threw upon the live coals substances which sent up dense fumes, so that I could hardly see across the room. Finally, as I crouched at the keyhole, he seized a brazen drum, and beat it, leaping around the room with an unnatural agility."

Giuseppe listened, open-mouthed and breathless. "He is surely in league — " was his exclamation, but Angolina interrupted.

"I could not see clearly, yet dimly I saw the little round-faced owls fly, all, to the stretched cords; and, as they alighted, I almost screamed out, in wonder and terror, for they perched there, in a certain order of grouping; and, with their little round faces, they looked exactly like notes on a music-staff.

"O Nina, O Nina!" burst out her eager sympathetic listener. "I understand now the dreadful secret of his magical art."

"Yes, yes! And he now quickly caught up a piece of music-paper, and, still muttering what must have been evil charms, my wicked uncle quickly transferred the melody, the theme, thus diabolically given him, to the paper."

The agitated girl trembled, and broke into sobs, whereupon her devoted lover put his arm about her and kissed her, reassuringly. "Fear not, little one!" he counselled. "You are in no peril — I, your Beppo, am here."

Presently she recovered herself, a little, and resumed: "That tells the secret, Beppo caro. Twice more that wicked old man

went through his awful incantation, and each time he transferred a motif, a theme, to his paper. Now we know whence come his mysterious and diabolic themes, which he works out, — poorly, I doubt not, for he is no real musician, — into his wild compositions. Ah, what chance hast thou, my love, my life — even though thou art a true artist — against the power of the Evil One! And to what good was it that I said the prayers and burned the candles before the saints. Yes, even before the altar of Saint Christopher, the Strong One! Even he cannot avail against the Prince of Darkness." And the exhausted girl sobbed, and clung fast to her lover's arm.

Poor, downcast Giuseppe led her along the leafy paths, trying to quiet and comfort her. As they came out into the bright sunshine, they both breathed more freely, and the young man ventured, "Perhaps, Nina dear — perhaps — at least is it possible, thinkest thou, that those same noxious fumes and odors, which came to thy nostrils, partly stupefied thee, or bewildered thy spirit, and made thee dream unrealities?"

"No, no!" cried the girl, confidently. "I know what I saw; I was quite myself, and clear-eyed as ever. I crept away from the door, and down to the shop, and soon was selling the carrots and the turnips, as always. No, Beppo Mia, it was no dream; it was all as I have told it."

Thus, as hardly needs detailing, the second prize was won by the evil old man. His composition was a fantastic "Danse Macabre;" and it threw the sensitive member of the group of judges into a swoon, while nearly all the others came through it with staring eyes, and bated breath. They were held spell-bound by its gruesome suggestiveness; and one afterward affirmed that as it was being played to them on the piano, by a skilled musician, he smelt sulphur in the air, and was half sure that he caught glimpses of a tall, grayish cloud-like form, in a corner of the hall, swaying fantastically in time with the weird music. Still, it was undoubtedly a wonderful composition, and although the judges mentioned, with warm approval, the "Cingalese Suite," which Giuseppe Fiorentini submitted, the prize must go to strange old Adolfo Spinelli, he of the shaggy brows and half-shut eyes.

But there was still another prize to be awarded, a month later; and, after little Angolina had recovered her nerve and her customary hopefulness of nature, she encouraged Giuseppe to make this third attempt. "Pluck up heart," she smiled at him, as he came slowly into the little shop, and she fastened a red rose in her hair, and threw a kiss across to him, over the bowed back of an old crone who was sourly examining some plums.

"Try once more, Beppo!" she enjoined, as the old dame went out — and she danced across, among the boxes and baskets, and curtsied playfully before him.

There was a bright confident light in her clear eyes, as Giuseppe looked listlessly into them, which made him suddenly wonder. She quickly answered his questioning look, putting her finger to her red lips as a caution, and whispering her words:

"Try yet again, Mio Caro! I have stolen away the big black book."

And, as he started, with astonishment and anxiety, she ran nervously on, yet bravely, "Yes, I have stolen it from him; it is safely hidden — Oh, where do you think?"

"But Nina, O my Ninetta," exclaimed Giuseppe. "Thy uncle will know thee for the culprit; and he will lay cruel vindictive hands upon thee, and — "

But the blithe creature was shaking her head, slowly, firmly, persistently, with laughter in her eyes. "Never fear, thou! I have averted all that." Then she half choked with laughter, as she whispered, "I took the awful volume — that book of Diabolus — I took it up carefully with tongs, tied it in paper with strong twine, and carried it, Ah, you could never guess." Then with a triumphant burst of sunshine in her great black eyes, "I carried it, one evening, to the Duomo, and I put it in the tiny closet under the great altar. There, now!" And she stood back, and claimed a meed of praise for her efforts. "It certainly will exert no evil influence in that place."

Giuseppe's face showed clearly his pride in her daring and her resourcefulness, and he stepped toward her, to give loving expression thereof; but she put him away, saying "Listen! I have not finished; be not anxious! I bought a little sulphur, and burned it, with a lot of paper, on the altar; there, now,

when he sees the ashes and smells the sulphur, he will feel sure where it has gone."

Then there was no holding him off, longer. He plunged at her, recklessly, and covered her red cheeks and laughing lips with warm kisses.

Still, before them lay the month of anticipation and hope, and the possibility of success. "A thousand lire." "Ah, with *that* two loving hearts might venture to begin a home for themselves. So, with fresh zeal, Giuseppe set himself to his task. He had a symphony already roughly outlined in his mind but had not felt the courage, before, to work it out. Now he felt a strength, as of ten men, in his one youthful heart. He began the Andante movement that evening.

As for Angolina, although she felt that she had undermined the enemy's stronghold, she did not give over the prayers and candles, and, without appearing to do so, she watched her hateful old uncle closely. He certainly was ill at ease. He ate little, he muttered constantly, he clenched and opened his big, bony hands without ceasing.

One week passed, and yet another. The little owls had escaped, at night, by a window, left open — purposely or by accident. Old Adolfo seemed busy, yet somewhat aimless, in the great rambling garret. Then she discovered that he had laid a long wooden track along the rafters overhead. He seemed to have found some suggestions in another smaller parchment book, which he brought out of the oak chest. He next painted on the long wooden track a musical staff. Evidently he was grimly and desperately determined to attempt some other occult and diabolic method of getting hold of weird themes. Later, he brought into the garret something which looked — as Angolina peeped cautiously through the keyhole — like a short, stout heavy cylindrical block of wood, much like a short cannon, or mortar; there was some clockwork connected with it, by which it could oscillate rapidly, standing where he had carefully placed it, under the wooden track, and moving in continuous line with it.

There was much about this infernal device which the young girl could not fathom, but one night she suspected, by her surly uncle's restlessness, that matters were coming to a head. He

did not go to bed at the usual time, and looked often at his watch, and she could detect curses and blasphemies on his wicked old lips.

At about eleven o'clock he stamped up into the garret, and the eager, excited girl followed, and stationed herself at the keyhole.

She saw him array himself in a grotesque black robe, decorated with figured red and black devils. He appeared to have prepared the strange cannon or mortar, beforehand; and he now devoted his attention to the altar, burning aromatic resins and gums, and studying hard over certain parchments and charts. Then he drew a knife from his pocket, made a slight incision in his arm, and with a pen, drew certain circles and triangles on one of the charts, in his own blood. After this he carefully prepared a quaint bottle-pipe, or narghile, and seated himself, with a violin, playing fantastic runs and cadences, meanwhile smoking vehemently. The room grew dense with gray fumes, and the odor was most repulsive, — even the little which came to the agitated girl at the keyhole. Then he touched a lever, and Angolina noticed that the singular mortarlike object was now oscillating rapidly. At times he paused, and chanted some occult charm, or formula, made up of strange harsh words, which she could not understand, and his face, under the influence of the drugs on the altar and in the bubbling pipe, became flushed and distorted, and dreadful to look upon.

Now he began the wild strains of Tartini's famous "Devil's Sonata." Little Nina, cowering at the keyhole, recognized its unearthly measures, she gasped under her pent-up excitement, her eyes almost bursting from their sockets, and she could hardly keep from fainting, then and there. She noticed, at the moment, a great gray rat, which ran out into the middle of the room, and raised itself on its hind legs, keeping time to the infernal strains; and, what was that? — A monstrous splay spider lowered himself from the rafter, and hung just above the now frenzied player's head.

She was torn by an excitement almost uncontrollable. She clasped her hands over her throbbing heart, and — then there came a tremendous explosion; she lost consciousness; she knew no more.

When the neighbors, aroused by the terrific explosion, broke their way into the crazy old house, and rushed up through it, they found Angolina, unconscious, but breathing; they found the door burst out by the explosion, and the windows also; and, within, they found the mangled, lifeless body of the evil old man, in the midst of the débris of his diabolic orgy.

From what Giuseppe could study out, in the chaos of the room, and what his Nina narrated to him, in trembling whispers, the next morning, the young composer understood that old Adolfo had planned to summon some demon or demons of the infernal abyss, by charms and incantations, and, by their influence, to spread along the wooden track, or music-staff, another of his occult malign themes. There were pellets of some adhesive substance clinging to the rafters, but in utter disorder, and as for the old necromancer, he had certainly been killed instantly, by the bursting of his mysterious engine of divination.

So that was what "happened," preventing crafty, cruel old Adolfo Spinelli from taking the third of the Crivalli prizes, in the year 1903, as he probably would have done, if he could have laid hold, by his magic arts, of another weird theme.

The symphony, which Giuseppe offered, received the award, among forty competitors; and, — what was more unexpected, — the death of the rich old uncle placed in his niece's hands the bulk of his hoarded fortune — some fifty thousand lire, which sum, you may be sure, made a most acceptable nest-egg for the devoted young couple, as they established their home, and as Giuseppe climbed upward, on the ladder of fame.

"Capture the Rival Mission!" *

BY HUBERT HAINES.

IT was a great and solemn day at The Retreat, as the theological seminary of the Close Communion Disciples, which nestled in a lovely and sequestered West Virginia valley, was affectionately called. A young theolog who had completed his course was to be ordained that morning and on the morrow would leave for one of the Fiji Islands, which had been in the exclusive pastoral charge of the Close Communion Disciples for half a century. The thirty other theologs filed into the seminary chapel wearing a look of quite unusual gravity. School ties are among the strongest in life, and there is always a sadness in breaking them even when the brother to whom we bid good-by steps into so exalted a state as the ministry. But to say, not good-by to a classmate whom we shall probably soon see again, but farewell to a companion who is setting out to face exile, hardship, and perhaps death, in the Fiji islands — well, the sober faces of those thirty theologs gave token how deeply it hurts. It hurt all the more in this case as Josiah Weeden — the apostle-designate — was the most popular man in the seminary. Full of warm human life, ever ready, sometimes at highly uncanonical moments, with a ringing laugh, big, broad-shouldered, handsome, Josiah had won all hearts and kept his own unspoiled. He had volunteered to go to the Fiji Islands and ridiculed the idea that he was making a great sacrifice. The mission there had lately lost its minister; some one was needed at once; and with a characteristic impulse of generosity, wholly without heroics, Josiah offered himself for the post. He was accepted, and to-day he was to be ordained. To-morrow he would bid good-by to the dear associations of The Retreat, and in four days more he would be on the bosom of the Pacific.

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The ordination ceremony over, Josiah sat down at the left of the pulpit, and the president of the seminary, Dr. Phineas Wellbeloved came forward to preach. Dr. Wellbeloved, a long, lean, stern-looking man of sixty, was intensely devoted to his denomination. Personally humble, he was proud of his church. Characteristically unworldly, he was jealous of her interests and insistent on her claims. His austere face on this particular morning was set in unwonted severity; perhaps — thought the students — to conceal his emotion, to keep from breaking down. It may have been partly due to that, but as the event was to show, there was another and a greater reason. He began with congratulating the young man who had reached the goal of his holy ambition. He rejoiced that the new minister was entering a field so honorable because so arduous. He promised him the affectionate and lasting sympathy of the seminary. He wished him the fullest measure of success. Then he paused. When he resumed speaking, never had his students seen him look so stern. Something unusual was pressing on his mind, there could be no doubt of it. There was. He said : "In connection with this occasion, I have to announce a piece of intelligence which has deeply saddened me, and vitally concerns the career of our young friend. For fifty years the Close Communion Disciples have had charge of the island to which Mr. Weeden is assigned. For fifty years we have labored there, spending our money which is a small matter, and devoting some of our best men which is a great matter, to build up a Christian community among the natives. We have been blessed with success ; our mission is prosperous ; our converts faithful ; our prospects most encouraging. By every just claim that mission field belongs to us. It is wrong, it is taking an unfair advantage, it will create disturbance and perplexity among the natives to have another sect enter so narrow a territory, competing with us, and perhaps hostile to us. Yet this has come to pass. I have learned that the Apostleship Brethren are about to send a missionary to the island to establish a rival mission." When the stir of pained astonishment which this announcement produced in the audience had been composed, Dr. Wellbeloved turned to Josiah Weeden and concluded with intense earnestness : "I would not wish to be un-Christian or to cherish unworthy jealous-

ies ; but I must express my belief that this action of that church is not to be tamely endured. Not merely our denomination, but the cause in general will suffer from it. And therefore I feel it a duty to say to you, Mr. Weeden, capture that rival mission ! Let not the work and sacrifices of fifty years be brought to naught. Let not unseemly opposition distress the minds of the primitive little flock whose evangelization has been committed to us. By your own methods, and according to your own judgment, I charge you, and it is my final word : Capture the rival mission ! "

Josiah Weeden felt relieved when the last faint line of the American coast receded from view, and nothing was to be seen but the world-wide waters of the Pacific. While those lights still shone afar, while yet he could catch a glimpse of native land, his heart would not be denied its sorrow nor his eyes, fight as he would, their tears. But now that it was over, now that the bitter cup of parting had been drained to the last, the solemn fortitude of loneliness came to him, and the strong man's desire to do a strong man's work. Now for the Fijis! Now for his rugged task! Now for — " Capture the rival mission! " Suddenly rang in his memory the echo of the president's last injunction. He turned from the stern-rail to walk the deck and ponder how he might capture it. Most of the passengers stood near by, the gayest of them not wholly free from homesickness, now that America was for a time no more. He knew none of them, and he edged his way through the throng to be alone, alone with that problem. He was destined, however, not to give much thought to it just then, for as he cleared the crowd, his attention was arrested and his sympathies aroused by the sight of a young woman seated in a deck-chair near the rail, who was sobbing uncontrollably. She was quite alone, and with her head resting on one arm which lay upon the rail, while the other hand held a handkerchief to her streaming eyes, she was a picture of utter woebegoneness and dejection.

Josiah hesitated an instant, wondering if he should venture a word of comfort, but decided not to do it and passed on. When next he reached her place after a slow circling of the deck, the violence of her grief was apparently over, but the full bitterness of it unmistakably remained. She was sitting erect now ; her

wet handkerchief lay in her lap, her hands folded over it ; and such red, swollen eyes as yearned across the swiftly-widening sea toward home. She was in the mid-twenties, Josiah conjectured; and despite the traces of her weeping, she looked certainly intelligent, and, as Josiah was inclined to think, handsome. Not a glance did she give him as he passed her chair. She had eyes only for America, and neither heart nor thought for anything besides. The young minister felt strangely drawn to her. From all appearances she had no traveling companion, and her helplessness and loneliness seemed to utter some mute and tender appeal to his big, sympathetic heart. He hoped he might come to know her well, so far as shipboard acquaintance goes, and be able to help her to bear a burden, which it was clear she found heavy, and which, it was also clear, those frail shoulders and that young heart of hers should not be called upon to bear. Twice more he circled the deck, and twice more saw her still alone, still gazing with infinite longing toward God's country, the Land of Heart's Desire.

Seldom had Josiah Weeden's heart given a quicker leap of joy than when, going down to dinner, he found as his right-hand table-companion the Lady of the Tears. She was in good spirits now, but very reserved though charmingly polite. Once or twice she smiled at the witticisms of the table-humorist — there is always a table-humorist — and beyond question there was witchery in her smile. Josiah of course was simply x to her, and she made not the slightest attempt to resolve the x into terms of known quantities. He was not wholly pleased at this aloofness, and wondered whether he should cease to think about her and her sorrows, or whether, in the hope of being of some assistance to her, he should make a direct and formal effort to interest her. Without having quite settled the point, he remarked toward the end of the meal : " It was pretty hard to see the coast of America drop into the distance wasn't it? "

Her big eyes looked straight into his as she answered : " Terribly hard. I just cried like a baby. I felt like — well I remember reading in Virgil of the grief of Queen Dido as the ship of Aeneas drew away from the coast of Carthage. To poor Dido's broken heart, the waters widening between her and the man she loved were as a grave in which hope and love and life were

buried forever. Call America Aeneas, and me Dido" — she smiled — "and you can fancy how I felt."

Josiah was immensely pleased. He had met many persons who had read Virgil, but not many who remembered much about it, and none at all who ever used it in this way to describe a vivid personal impression. And as Virgil happened to be his favorite among the classics, she had without knowing it touched one of his acutest sensibilities. It was delightful.

"The comparison however," he responded, smiling, "fails in some particulars. In the first place, Aeneas jilted Dido, which our country will never do to us; and in the second place, Dido killed herself, which — "

A merry laugh cut him short. "Yes," she said; "the comparison fortunately fails. But it came into my head anyway. I dare say you recall that glorious description of Dido's grief:

"Tum vero infelix fatis exterrita Dido
Mortem orat; taedet coeli convexa tueri."

"Admirable," cried Josiah, which ambiguous epithet was meant for her and not for Virgil. "I have a Virgil with me," he continued; "shan't we read the passage to-morrow, and — and talk about it on deck to-night?"

Talk about it they did in the tender moonlight that fell on a placid sea. Read it they did next morning; and for ten days and moonlit nights thereafter they read and talked of many things, together, alone together. The conversations, however, were wholly impersonal, being chiefly about books. Josiah knew nothing of her except that her name was Miss Mason; and her knowledge of him was correspondingly slight. The eleventh evening she spent in her state-room, and Josiah walked the deck alone with a distinct sense of loss. He feared that her absence made him miserable. He wondered if that was an ache in his heart as he turned into the salon at half-past ten. On the threshold he met her. "I am just coming up for five minutes of fresh air," she said. And those five minutes relieved that sense of loss, cured that ache, and sent Josiah to bed with his heart feeling as though it were about to burst into a song.

Five days more, and Josiah would land at his forlorn post. Forlorn indeed without her! Would he dare to tell her of his

love? Would he, a poor foreign missionary, dare to ask her to become his wife? "Impossible!" he groaned. She was of course bound for Australia, and they would never meet again. Impossible!

Yet two nights later, though his reason shouted Impossible! as loud as ever, his heart flung itself blindly against the harsh verdict and spoke. First he told her simply and straightforwardly that he loved her. Then he put the difficulties. He was a missionary. He was to land Thursday morning at Mojambo —

"Mojambo!" she cried. "Why, Dearest, I am going to Mojambo as the advance missionary of the Apostleship Brethren!"

One morning a week later, the stern face of Dr. Phineas Wellbeloved broke into a radiant smile as he read the cablegram:

"I have captured the rival mission. Weeden."

His Valet.*

BY ALFRED B. OSGOODBY.

IN spite of the fact that Springer was the best man-servant in the world — quiet, unobtrusive, and efficient, possessing that rarest of all qualities, loyalty, combined with a sense of well-seasoned discretion, natural only to a man past middle age and familiar with worldly affairs — Harper hesitated to break the news to him.

During his tenure of service, Springer had become quite well acquainted with his master's affairs; and when Harper learned to trust him, as he quickly did after the first few months, there was no attempt made to conceal from the valet many matters of even a personal character.

Springer never betrayed by the slightest expression of his immobile countenance that he understood anything which Harper would naturally prefer him not to understand.

At first the man had been an enigma to the master. Then, as the true quality of his real character slowly but surely asserted itself, Harper suddenly awakened to the realization that he possessed a servant whose intelligence was equalled only by his tactful allegiance.

Of the man's past, Harper knew nothing, and cared less.

The service had begun in an unusual manner, through a chance meeting, when Springer, one winter's night, had saved a boy from being run over in the street, and Harper, stopping to compliment him on his bravery, had become interested in the fellow, and acting on impulse, as he often did, had, without ceremony, or inquiry as to his antecedents, installed him in the position he had since occupied. The result was that Harper's innate knowledge of human nature proved itself again, and day by day his confidence in the man justifiably grew.

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Yet, to-night, as he settled himself comfortably in a big chair before the fire, he knitted his brow and pondered long, deferring the announcement he felt must inevitably be made within the half hour.

It is not the easiest task in the world to present a wife to one who has always supposed you unmarried, even though that one be a servant.

He knew exactly how Springer would receive the news — with a deferential bow, and as a matter of course.

The explosion of a Nihilist's bomb would not have disturbed Springer's equanimity.

But for once in his life, Harper was suffering from a severe attack of self-consciousness. The thought even entered his head that he had deceived Springer.

The minute hand of the clock on the mantel had raced itself to nearly half-past eight, and he was due at the railroad station at nine o'clock to meet the wife who had voluntarily separated herself from him three years before.

Harper roused himself from the lulling comfort of his easy chair and nervously passed his fingers through the mass of dark brown hair that was beginning to turn gray at the edges. Then, casting his half-smoked cigar into the fire, he paced the room slowly.

For a few moments his mind ceased to dwell on the perplexity of the situation that immediately confronted him, and his thoughts contrasted the past with the present, and held no small wonderment as to the future.

His marriage, when past thirty-five, to a charming woman several years younger than himself, had been happy for a while. Until almost the day of his wedding, Harper had considered himself irrevocably linked to the life of a bachelor.

The marriage was one of those unaccountable freaks of impulse which had, at times, punctuated his career, and was the result of a short, but very ardent infatuation. He had justified the suddenness of the serious step by the assurance to himself that there was no other woman in the world quite like her in either beauty or character. It was the rare loveliness of her face that first attracted him, and a brief acquaintance was sufficient to convince

him that no woman had ever before possessed such grace of manner or so sweet a temperament.

A month after their first meeting, they were quietly married, without formal announcement, and settled down in a small, but very modern and elaborate apartment, in an exclusive neighborhood.

The young wife had expressed her preferment for the kaleidoscopic existence to be found in one of the ultra-fashionable hotels; but she had deferred to Harper's enthusiastic desire for domesticity.

For six months they were like a pair of cooing doves in a well-feathered nest; then, as a result of a series of tactful arguments and plaintive pleadings Harper was cajoled into forsaking their seclusion and taking up an abode at a hotel noted alike for its exclusiveness and a patronage that was alive to social activities.

At first Harper entered with zest into the feverish round of gaiety that their new environment brought them. He was proud of his young wife; of her beauty, her attainments, and of the interest that was naturally centred in her.

The feeling of pride, however, gave way to a sense of jealousy, when, one night, a gallant young bachelor held his wife's hand a trifle longer than seemed necessary. His mild expostulation, when they were later alone, was met with an expression of such innocent surprise in her baby-blue eyes, that Harper was thoroughly ashamed of himself.

One evening, within a week of this incident, he discovered her in the act of taking a red rose from her corsage and fastening it to the lapel of a distinguished-looking foreigner with whom she was waltzing.

Harper became furious, and a scene followed. Their quarrel was continued after they had retired to their apartment, but her sobs and tears broke his spirit utterly, and he was convinced that her indiscretion was merely born of ingenuousness.

When, however, he found his young wife, one night, folded in the arms of a well known man-about-town, who acted very much as if he were about to usurp the privilege of her lips, which Harper had fondly believed all his own, the husband experienced a moral cataclysm; and on her part, she found this

episode more difficult to explain than her previous peccadillos.

Harper went to his club to live, and after a week spent in alternately wondering whether to shoot his rival or forgive his wife, he decided upon a middle course, and sent his lawyer to act as mediator. That individual found nothing to do. The bride of a twelvemonth had departed the day before for Europe, and Harper was obliged to content himself with the meagre information that the distinguished-looking foreigner of the rose incident had been a passenger on the same steamer.

Harper shrugged his shoulders, and sought his old bachelor quarters. For a time he was subject to moods of despondency, and his depression was encouraged by self-exile; then he became a cynic and woman-hater. Gradually, however, the phlegmatic temperament of yore re-asserted itself, and he had just about begun to forget his wife's existence, when, two years after their separation, he received from her a daintily scented communication, written from the Hotel Cecil, London, telling him of a long and serious illness from which she was just recovering, and referring for the first time to the circumstances of her sudden departure. He read every line with growing interest, and his sympathy was touched by the recital of her sufferings. When he came to the part where she told of how she had run away because she could not bear the portent of his awful accusations and, therefore, preferred to live in a foreign land, secluded from the world in the sorrow of their separation, he actually kissed the letter.

It was natural that he should promptly answer it, though he wrote his reply three times before he mailed it. The response he finally sent was the kind she had looked for. The old love had awakened within him, and he told her how lonesome he had been during the two years of her absence. In fervid language he asserted his old-time love; asked her forgiveness for his impetuous and unfounded suspicions; and urged her to either return immediately or permit him to join her in London. In reply, he received a cable, saying simply: "Await my letter." He waited a month for the letter. His anxiety had reached the verge of despair, when it finally came, postmarked from Vienna. There were but a few lines, hurriedly written, telling him of an unexpected relapse; a brief sojourn at Baden-Baden under instruc-

tions of her physician; and the fact that she was en route to an unnamed destination for treatment by a specialist. She promised to write again soon.

Two months elapsed without further news. Harper's love and fears grew apace. All his old affection for the wife he fully believed he had wronged was quickened to a maddening intensity.

On a sudden impulse, after many sleepless nights, he packed a suit-case and took passage for Europe on an hour's notice. He would find the long-suffering and sick wife, and atone for his neglect by personal ministrations to her needs.

The six-day voyage was fraught with forebodings of the worst. He pictured her in decline, sick of an incurable malady, and bravely bearing, in an uncomplaining spirit, the sequence of his own foolhardy and groundless suspicions.

But the trip was unavailing. In London he found little trace of her. She had been at the Cecil two days, unaccompanied. From there she had gone to the Carlton for a week; but beyond this he could learn nothing. Hastening to Baden-Baden, in the vain hope of tracing her movements, he inquired at every resort where it was possible she might have stopped, without eliciting the slightest information regarding her. From there he journeyed to Vienna, and spent nearly a week in fruitless search. After advertising in a guarded fashion in the principal Continental newspapers, without result, his last hope vanished, and he returned, disconsolate, to his bachelor apartment in New York, where only the faithful Springer awaited him.

Upon his arrival, Harper waded through a mass of accumulated mail in the assurance that she had written him during his absence; but there was no message, and he settled himself in a gloom of abject morbidness.

He was convinced that his wife's malady had proven fatal, and he spent hours at a time gazing at photographs, reading her perfumed missives again and again, and fondly caressing all the little keepsakes of their courtship and marriage.

His obsession was such that Springer noticed it, and was unusually attentive to his master without being intrusive. In fact, he expressed no wonder when Harper affected a mourning band and discarded colors in his dress for black.

The master did not deign to explain, and to Springer his silence was eloquent.

A melancholy atmosphere pervaded the bachelor quarters; there were no guests, and Harper kept himself closely to his own private apartment.

After this state of affairs had continued for three months, Springer was suddenly aroused one morning from the lethargic condition into which he had been slowly drifting.

For some time the servant had been relieved of one duty — that of receiving the morning mail. Hoping against hope, Harper had personally pursued the quest for a letter from day to day.

When it did arrive, even Springer's equilibrium was temporarily upset by his master's complete change of demeanor and appearance.

The passing of the black in Harper's attire was the first thing to attract his valet's attention. His metamorphosis of manner was so sudden as to create a reasonable suspicion of an unbalanced mind; but Springer truthfully attributed it to simple rejuvenation.

He questioned not the cause, but inwardly welcomed the change.

As for Harper, he read the letter until he knew every word of it. His spirits ran high and he alternately kissed the letter and hugged himself.

She was coming home to him — but not immediately; he must be patient a while longer; she had been very ill again, but would not worry him for the world; that was the reason she had not written. Did he love her very much? Would he be glad to see her again, or had he tired of waiting? Her sole thought was of him; and through the long months of her suffering, she had been sustained by love of him.

She knew he had not intended to wrong her, and when she had thought death near she had written a little note telling him of her love and forgiveness; but happily, it had not been necessary to send it. Would he wait a little longer, and she would bring to him, in person, a heart full of love. The days were long to her, and the waiting a monotonous tedium; but she wanted to come to him quite well, and — forgive her if it sounded vain — with the

roses in her cheeks, as they used to be in their happy days. She must take a long sea-voyage — it had been prescribed as necessary to her complete convalescence. She was going a long way — around the world. It would be so lonesome — each day would be so long — but in the end how happy they would both be again.

Harper placed the letter down and sighed.

How much longer must he wait?

But it was some consolation to know he had not lost her altogether, and that now she was actually on the way home to him, though her route was roundabout.

The months dragged slowly on, but the time was made shorter, and Harper was made happier because of the increasing frequency of her letters, the postmarks of which indicated to his anxious mind that the "trip around the world" was bringing his wife closer to home every day.

When she had finally started on the long voyage across the Pacific, his joy was boundless, and he would have hastened over the continent to meet her in San Francisco Bay, had she not expressly forbidden it, giving as her reason that she preferred their first meeting after so many years to be upon the scene of the old, happy days of their courtship; and that she wanted nothing to remind either him or herself of the painful separation they had both endured.

Her words strongly appealed to Harper's sentimental nature, and he contented himself with a telegraphic order to a San Francisco florist which resulted in transforming his wife's stateroom, on the morning of her arrival, into a bower of roses, with here and there a sprinkling of forget-me-nots.

If there had been the slightest doubt in the young wife's mind as to the fervency of the welcome which awaited her, the last trace of it was banished when she read his ardent message of love, flashed overland by the impatient, waiting husband.

The last day of her journey was at hand, and Springer carried out in faithful detail the orders of his master, which, to his unquestioning mind indicated the entertainment of a personage of royalty.

The last few hours, to Harper, were longer than all the months that had gone before, and yet, with arrangements completed for

her reception, he had not told Springer the truth or even vouchsafed the slightest explanation. At the last moment it seemed more impossible than ever to do so.

Suddenly he resolved upon a line of conduct, and touching a bell which summoned the valet, he remarked with averted eyes and a manner of assumed nonchalance:

"Springer, you are relieved for twenty-four hours. Go at once. Be back to-morrow evening."

Then, as the door closed behind the departing valet, Harper felt real relief. It would be easier, he argued, to let Springer find the true state of affairs actually in existence without any preliminary explanation.

The next afternoon, after a drive in the park, Harper and his young wife, who seemed prettier than ever, returned to his apartment. She still pleaded fatigue after her long journey, and he left her reclining in *negligee*, while, at her suggestion, but much against his own inclination, he sought his club.

The old fires of love were ablaze again. He found himself madly devoted to her. It was like beginning their courtship all over again. She had been very affectionate and tender to him; and when he attempted, on several occasions, to apologize for his hasty and ill-considered jealousy, she hushed his lips with kisses, and hung about his neck with her dainty, bared arms, till he found himself in a delirium of love which still dazed him.

It was hard for him to leave her side for even a short time; and after a couple of hours spent in moping about the club, he stole homeward with a sense of guilty impatience. He contented himself with the thought that even if he should find her sleeping, he could at least sit quietly at her side and feast himself upon her loveliness.

He entered the apartment upon tip-toe that he might not disturb her. The shades were drawn, and the room was in semi-darkness. He crossed quietly to the divan where she had lain when he went out. He groped among the disordered pillows only to find the couch deserted. Then he spoke her name softly, but there was no answer. His eyes had grown accustomed to the dim light, and he glanced quickly about. The young wife was not to

be seen. Perplexed for the moment, he raised the shades, and in the fuller light, he noted at a glance that she was not in the room. He entered the one adjoining, and again called her by name, but without response.

While he was standing half-bewildered, and wondering at her absence, there was a low knock at the door; it opened, and Springer appeared.

"I beg your pardon for intruding, sir," he commenced, but Harper scarcely heard the words. He was on the verge of inquiring for his wife, when he suddenly remembered that Springer had not yet been made aware of the circumstances.

"I beg your pardon, sir," the valet repeated. "But if you don't mind, sir, I should like to say — " Springer was nervously folding his hands, and his eyes wavered from those of his master.

Harper did not speak. He was just beginning to realize that the man was addressing him. Springer broke the momentary silence:

"I know it is of no interest to you, sir," he began, "and I have no right to intrude my personal affairs upon you, but if you don't mind, sir, — " he hesitated, and then continued: "I should like to tell you, sir, that about eight years ago, while I was living abroad, sir, I was married to a very pretty woman — pardon me, sir, I know it is of no interest to you — and we were very happy together, sir — that is, for about a year — and then I returned home one night and found she had left me, sir — she had run away with another man, and it was a year before I heard from her. She wrote me asking for forgiveness. I loved her, and took her back again. But it did not last long, sir." Springer's nervousness was increasing, and he spoke rapidly. Harper merely stared at him.

"Her pretty face had attracted a German officer, and she went away with him. I never heard from her again, sir; but occasionally I received information about her. The affair with the German officer lasted only a short time, sir. Then she became the sweetheart of a Russian duke. She was a very pretty woman, sir. Later on, an Englishman fell in love with her, but she soon quarreled with him, and I heard a few years ago that she had married a prominent American, though I could not understand it, sir, be-

cause we had never been divorced. The matter did not interest me, however; she was no longer in my life, sir, and I lost track of her for some time."

There was a quizzical look on Harper's face. He was listening intently now. The valet caught his breath and went on:

"It was about a year ago that I heard of her again, sir. Friends in Europe wrote me that she was living abroad, and — I am sorry to say it, sir, — she had two or three other affairs, but finally married a rich Austrian. He was an elderly man, in poor health, and lived only a few months. He left her a considerable fortune, and she traveled extensively. It has been several months since I've had news of her. I never expected to see her again. You will understand, sir, that I was much surprised, when, upon my return to your apartment this afternoon, I found her here — but she is gone, sir."

Springer's attitude had been obsequious, and now it became apologetic.

"I trust I have not annoyed you, sir," he said. "Will you dine alone to-night?"

Harper thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and strolled across the room to an open window.

"Yes," he answered steadily. "To-night and every other night."

The Postscript.*

BY HELEN PARKER.

HENDRIKSON told me about it one night as we sat in front of Tony's and watched a long black line of men with dinner-pails wind out of the factory and scatter like spilled mercury.

"You saw that red-headed fellow?" said he. "Well, he looks an awful lot like Barney Benton. Didn't I ever tell you about him?"

Upon my denial Hendrikson emptied his pipe, knocked it clean in the palm of his hand, and after stowing it away in his hip pocket fell to stroking his stubby beard — losing somewhere in the process the merry twinkle from his eye.

"Queer fellow, Barney," he said, after a long pause. "Didn't know who his folks were. Couldn't remember any childhood at all. Fact is he couldn't remember anything back of a time when he was about fifteen years old. 'Half-wit Barney' we used to call him.

"He'd knocked around pretty much all over the world. Knew Indians like a brother. You couldn't show him an Indian rug or basket but he'd tell you just what tribe made it and all about it. He had a lot of charms and jewels — necklaces and things he'd picked up everywhere under Heaven. Some of 'em he'd look at kind of blank and say he couldn't remember. Others of 'em he'd tell us about and about places where he'd been — the north countries with their lonesome trails and horrible cold. He'd frozen his feet sometime or other, that's one thing made him lame. He'd tell about the baking, bone-cluttered desert, and ports in far off countries with their ships in the harbor all saffron and orange colored, and the islands of the sea.

"I can see 'em now — the water lapping their shores — the dark women — and the palms. And I never was out of Manhat-

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tan except as we fellows sat in back of Tony's and listened to him, our mouths open like we had a tooth to be pulled. It was like reading a book. He'd thrill you like a typhoid chill.

"But he was queer. Awful queer-looking, too. About six feet tall he was, and slim as a rail. He was a little bow-legged and one leg was longer'n the other. He had a great mop of thick, bright red hair, chock full of cowlicks. He stammered a little when he was excited. He was terrible deaf, too. He'd get up close to you and look you right in the eyes to tell what you said. That's what scared women so and made it hard for him to keep a job, even on an ice wagon or grocery cart. That, and his smiling. Seemed 'sthough he was always grinning.

"You don't know how queer he'd look smiling and showing two of the whitest, evenest rows of teeth you ever saw out of a dentist's window. And his blue eyes — blue like a child's — wide open and looking you through and through and way back to your grandmother.

"Well — he fell in love. Yes, sir, a fellow like that! Don't laugh — though we used to for that matter. She was a widow, a youngish, black-eyed, shining-haired creature with a tiny round waist and little bits of high-heeled shoes that went click, click on the sidewalk. She had a child, a boy, a cute little curly-headed thing that looked like a picture on a Sunday-school card.

"Of course it was hopeless from the start, hopeless as though you'd expect to carry away the Atlantic Ocean by running at it with a tea-strainer. More'n one perfectly good man, as far as the looks of him went, wanted the widow; I did too.

"But the sight of 'half-wit Barney' leaving posies at her front door and cherries at her back, sending her foreign jewelry anonymous, and begging to put on her screens, was awful funny. We thought so then. At night he'd walk past her flat — she was way up on the seventh floor — with his store clothes, his red shoes that matched his hair, his big crimson tie with the green stone in it, — a real jewel it was, in a queer carved gold setting — an odd, creepy thing that some prince person had given him — honest, we'd watch him and just double up laughing. She laughed, too.

"She said it seemed 'sthough she never opened a door that

he or his flowers or fruit weren't there, or put up a window and looked down into the street that she didn't look into his face. It got so she hated to open her mail box on account of the letter that might be there. Yes, sir, he used to write to her. Good letters they were, too. She told me about it afterward. Sometimes I think those letters tumbled out of some part of his brain untouched by the awful calamity — whatever it was — that had left him the maimed, twisted thing he was. Lord, how he loved her! At the last he wrote her every day, every day. . . ."

Hendrikson cleared his throat, and dropped his jaw into his upturned palms. The streets were thinning quickly, as they do about seven in the evening. Between the rush of day and the fever of night there settled a moment's calm, golden with the glow of sunset far beyond the eye of the city. It was horribly hot. In narrow hallway doors women sat with their babies and fanned their bare throats with gingham aprons.

"It was a night like this — only hotter," Hendrikson went on — "later, too; I guess about eleven o'clock. Some of us were sitting here in front of Tony's as you and I are now. All at once there was a clang of bells, and fire engines began tearing through the streets. In a minute the air was full of smoke and the smell of burning wood.

"You see that new apartment building over there? No — east of that. Yes. It was where that is, an old shell with fifteen families living in it. It burned like excelsior. The people were burned to death.

"That night was hell! I'll never forget it. I try to but I can't. I wake up nights and I see the walls of flame under the inky sky; the windows vomiting smoke and, out of each one, men, women, and little children leaning and calling — calling. . . . God! And down below, helpless as ants, we crawled — hundreds of us! After a while, in the shouting, roaring mob firemen began carrying people out — hurrying, pushing each other — for it was going fast. One of the firemen brought a woman crying, tearing at the hands that held her to his breast. He set her down on the wet pavement. It was the widow, Barney's widow.

"She tried to get away from him and go back into the build-

ing. Above the awful roar she shrieked at him — I can hear it 'til my dying day — '*My baby! my baby! I told you he was there! Let me go back for my baby!*'

"We looked and way up there in a seventh-story window leaned her little boy, his yellow curls gleaming in the light of hellish flames. He had on one of those little nighties with legs on 'em and he was holding a teddy bear and a toy engine. The widow — she fought like a demon. It took two men to hold her. But it was too late for any one to go up. It was the only whole wall left standing. The roar was deafening. The heat drove us back but, honestly, we couldn't take our eyes off that little fellow between us and Heaven.

"Then — then out of a candy store — that one right over there where the man is pulling up the awning — wrapped in a dripping red blanket came Barney Benton. He lifted his face in the light of the flames. I can see it yet as though it was yesterday. He waved his hand to the little tad and he smiled. I told you he was always smiling.

"Men held their breath and then cheered. And then, when they saw what he was going to do an awful hush settled over everything, and the quiet sobbing of women was the only human sound through the roar of flames, the crashing of falling timbers and broken glass.

"The widow had fainted.

"Barney, without a stammer, ordered the firemen about as though all his life he had ruled a nation. You'll think it's queer, but I've a notion he was all there that night. I think something had come back to him at sight of that fire — some bit of machinery in his mind had slipped into place and at last he was what God meant him to be.

"They put up ladders for him, up five stories. He went up a ways and reached down for another. He went up, up. The wall was so hot that water sizzled against it in steam, and here and there great tongues of flame shot out.

"At the top of the long ladder he placed the shorter one; it lay almost flat against the scorching wood. He went up — how, God knows — clinging to loosened siding, empty window casings — up, up — and reached up his big, hairy arm and

caught the baby. Then down, down — while we held our breath. When he got to the long ladder the wall bulged! As it fell, the ladder went back over the street. We watched him swing out in a great circle, the scorched blanket hanging to him like a banner, and the baby held high up in his — awful — charred — hand. . . .

"Not a curl on the baby's head was singed. But Barney. . . . It was his neck you know.

"When we uncovered his face, he was still smiling and in a smoking pocket was his daily letter — to her. When she came to, we put them in her arms — the scorched letter and the laughing boy."

Jackson's Monkeys.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

ANY things are done in the name of the Viceroy and Governor General in Council for which His Excellency can hardly be held accountable personally. For example, the notice in the Indian State Railway carriages pertaining to the exclusion of dogs. If you were to ask the Viceroy about that order he would probably look very much surprised, His Excellency having no knowledge at all of said canine ordinance. But this story has nothing to do with dogs. It relates to an order in council governing the situation in a district overpopulated with monkeys. Said monkeys being holy animals, must not be in any way maltreated, thereby giving offense to Hindu religious prejudice, but on representation to the local authority that shopkeepers and other divers persons are suffering from the depredations of monkeys, said local authority shall order the capture and deportation of as many monkeys as in his judgment will conduce to a relief of the situation. In all respects an admirable rule, but which, like many others, is apt not to work out quite so well in practice. For this reason : The majority of districts, being already overpopulated with monkeys, do not cordially welcome an additional burden of outside deities. Even the pious Hindu is puzzled at times what to do with his legion of animal and other gods. But this did not at all trouble Jackson, when the native headmen of Kotar reported to him that unless measures were taken for their protection, not a grain of rice would be left in the bazaar. The monkeys, led by certain brazen individuals, had swarmed into Kotar, and were growing fat by their depredations. What they did not eat they scattered wantonly, and the merchants, fearful of sacrilege in using force to protect their produce, faced the unfortunate alternative of bankruptcy.

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"We are poor people," pleaded the spokesman of the turbaned and solemn visaged deputation to Jackson. "We grow thin through this misfortune, as the Presence can see for himself. If the Heaven Born pleases, we wish that he will exert his influence with the monkeys, so that we be not utterly ruined, and much sorrow brought on our families."

The Heaven Born Jackson was benevolently pleased to exert his influence, according to the regulation of the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council. He straightway ordered that the ringleaders of the monkeys be captured and deported. To that end if it was a comparatively easy matter to construct a stout bamboo cage on a railway flat car, not so by any means was capturing the monkeys. Over the thatched roofs, in and out of windows, down rickety stairs, chattering, screaming, leaping from crumbling mud wall to tree bough went the holy monkeys ; while for the most part those deputed to catch them did nothing but salaam and beg their Godships to walk into very absurd traps.

You will appreciate Jackson's position when forced to take a hand in the chase. It is quite hot in Kotar, also dusty ; so between the flaming red heat and the powdered white dust, the superstitious natives and the elusive monkeys, Jackson liquified several pounds of tissue, and swore a great deal before he captured a score or more of gray-whiskered old villains and landed them securely within the bamboo cage of the flat car. This he dispatched by the next down-country freight train billed for a place called Krishnapur, which was ruled over by a man named Foster.

Jackson thought Foster would help him out with the monkeys, because he had recently done the Deputy Commissioner of Krishnapur a friendly turn. He also felt he had performed his duty toward the people of Kotar, until he received a polite letter from Foster, expressing his regret that he was unable to accommodate any more monkeys in his district, and advising Jackson to try some one else. So back came the grinning, chattering cage of monkeys. Jackson was of course disappointed to see the monkeys, but that was not all, far from it. The native station master of Kotar presented himself with a grave face.

"Sir," said he, "the sahib will recollect that when he ordered the monkeys sent away, there were thirty-one in the cage. Now

behold there are forty-seven. That, as the sahib will understand, is an increase of sixteen monkeys."

The native station master took great pride in his accuracy as to figures, but at the moment it did not soften Jackson's wrath toward Foster seizing the opportunity to unload precisely sixteen of his own undesirable monkeys. He wrote Foster an angry letter about it, promising to get even with him some day, and in the meantime ordered the monkeys sent on up the line to a man named Gardner. In ordinary circumstances it would have been easy to work off the monkeys on Gardner, who, unlike Foster, was always willing to oblige a friend in an emergency. But Jackson's carload of monkeys arrived just at the time that the Hindus were about to celebrate the feast of Hunuman, the Monkey God. So what was more natural than that they should take it as a sign from the God himself that the auspicious hour had come to start a riot and belabor the heads of their Mohammedan fellow subjects.

Thus word was brought to Gardner that a procession, with tom-toms beating, conch shells blowing, clubs brandishing, and much noise and dust, was on its way to the station to receive the newly arrived monkey deities in all honor. On the return journey to Hunuman's temple they hoped to encounter a Mohammedan crowd, with broken heads in consequence. Gardner quickly grasped the situation, so far as ridding himself of the monkeys and the Hindus of their inauspicious omen. He shouted for his horse, and rode straight for the station, happily arriving there before the procession.

"Send that monkey car off by the first train passing," he ordered the native superintendent. "Understand, it's a government order — the first train which passes. Get those beasts away from here as soon as possible."

The native superintendent, being a Mohammedan and caring nothing about monkeys, promised obedience. Then Gardner rode hurriedly away to head off the procession. But he had given what was a very reckless order, because if a native is not absolutely literal he is chaotic. The first train passing was Gardner's order, and that settled it in the native mind. Now the first train which came along happened to be a special, carrying no less a person than the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, on one of his grand

tours to visit native kings and such folk. It did not pull up at the station, Morar being an unimportant place, but stopped beyond just long enough to water the locomotive. But during that short period the native superintendent, with the assistance of a gang of coolies, was able to push the monkey car up and link it on to the rear of the Viceroy's special, such being the Commissioner Sahib's distinct order.

The coupling had barely been adjusted, when the Viceregal special started with a proud blast from the whistle. It sped on through green rice fields, where natives, perched on high fragile platforms to scare away voracious birds and animals, gazed with awe-inspired wonder at the car of gods trailing behind the representative of the Padshah's special. It dashed through Kotar without notice of Jackson, and on until it gradually approached Krishnapur.

As His Excellency purposed holding an informal levee at the Krishnapur railway station, Foster was on the platform in full dress, attended by local native gentlemen in long embroidered coats and brilliant turbans. On the roofs of side buildings swarmed the dark skinned, lightly clad populace. Foster was rather proud of the gathering, as a tribute of native respect to the Viceroy. So, too, thought the Viceroy, when, glancing from the window, he beheld the low salaams of the native gentlemen, and evidently a prodigious interest stirred up on the roofs at his advent. While His Excellency prepared to decend to the platform, Foster, following the absorbed gaze of the native gentlemen turned upon the rear of the train, started with unconcealed astonishment.

"My word!" he gasped. "I'll — I'll be hanged if the Viceroy hasn't brought along Jackson's confounded monkeys. What the deuce does he mean by it?"

The Viceroy stepped to the platform, quite prepared to acknowledge the profound respect which he thought was being paid him, when a wild chattering, screaming chorus rose from the rear of his train. He looked, and saw what was certainly not the usual accompaniment of a Viceregal progress, however much it might impress the native mind. He wanted an explanation at once, and to obtain it the telegraph wires ran hot messages back and forth. When a fairly cohesive report was forthcoming, His